

RAPID REVIEWS 2009

Book reviews by Amy Howlett, Ernie Drown,
Susan Guilmette, and Lynne Shotton Reed
given May 12, 2009 at the Vermont Library Conference
Sheraton Conference Center, Burlington, VT

LITERARY PURSUITS

Barbary, Muriel. **Elegance of the Hedgehog.** Penguin, 2008. Paper. ISBN 978-1-9333-7260-0. \$15.00. A French concierge who hides her intellectual, art loving self, and a suicidal 12 year old bourgeois girl who live in the same building become friends and their lives change. LSR

Barry, Brunonia. **Lace Reader.** HarperCollins, 2008. ISBN 978-0-0616-2476-6. \$24.95. The violence of the past begins to resurface in this mystery of what happened to our unreliable narrator. "We all find means of anesthesia," and Towner moves toward honesty and acceptance. SG

Robinson, Roxana. **Cost.** Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 2008. ISBN 978-0-3742-7187-9. \$25.00. Paper, ISBN 978-0-3124-2846-4. \$15.00. The heroin addiction of a younger son forces the family to confront plenty of guilt and love and denial. SG

Stein, Garth. **The Art of Racing in the Rain.** HarperCollins, 2008. ISBN 978-0-0615-3793-6. \$23.95. Paper, ISBN 978-0-0615-3796-7. \$14.99. A novel told through the eyes of a perceptive and experienced dog. A race car driver learns to persevere. AH

Wolman, David. **Righting the Mother Tongue: From Olde English to Email.** Collins, 2008. ISBN 978-0-0613-6925-4. \$24.95. Why are there so many "rules" in English spelling? Fun. ED***

HISTORY

Bunch, Will. **Tear Down This Myth.** Free Press, 2009. ISBN 978-1-4165-9762-9. \$25.00. An important book that reminds us exactly what Reagan and his handlers did. ED***

Cleave, Chris. **Little Bee.** Simon & Schuster, 2009. ISBN 978-1-4165-8963-1. \$24.00. A novel focuses on one Nigerian refugee to examine Western good intentions and the stark truths of an oil-dependent world. AH

Ehrman, Bart D. **Jesus Interrupted.** HarperOne, 2009. ISBN 978-0-0611-7393-6. \$25.99. An excellent discussion book about contradictions in the Bible, and what they might mean for those of faith. ED

Ford, Jamie **Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet.** Ballantine Books, 2009. ISBN 978-0-3455-0533-0. \$24.00. Henry recalls a childhood romance from the 1940's. His girlfriend and her family were interned in the Japanese camps, and he finds she is still alive today. SG

Horn, Dara. **All Other Nights.** W.W. Norton, 2009. ISBN 9780-3930-6492-6. \$24.95. A different take on the Civil War: notions of loyalty, northern Jew vs. southern Jew, family vs. the cause. Another wonder by Dara Horn. LSR ***

Houghteling, Sara. **Pictures at an Exhibition.** Knopf, 2009. ISBN 978-0-3072-6685-9. \$24.95. One of history's great unfinished stories. What happened to the world's great masterpieces looted by the Nazi's during the occupation of Paris. LSR

Jordan, Hillary. **Mudbound.** Algonquin, 2008. ISBN 978-1-5651-2569-8. \$22.95. Paper, ISBN 978-1-5651-2677-0. \$13.95. The stirring of the fight for civil rights, two families, one black, one white in the years following World War II. LSR

Werth, Barry. **Banquet at Delmonico's.** Random House, 2009. ISBN 978-1-4000-6778-7. \$27.00. Darwin's ideas, interpreted by Herbert Spencer, set off a firestorm of discussion in the Gilded Age of the 1870's. SG

A GOOD STORY

George, Rose. **The Big Necessity.** Metropolitan, 2008. ISBN 978-0-8050-8271-5. \$26.00. A fascinating, funny and informative – and important—book about sanitation. ED

Ghosh, Amitav. **Sea of Poppies.** Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2008. ISBN 978-0-3741-7422-4. \$26.00. The first novel of a trilogy set in 1830's India, when the British took over the opium business. Huge cast of characters pulls us into the time. SG***

Kunstler, James Howard. **World Made by Hand.** Atlantic Monthly, 2008. ISBN 978-0-8711-3978-8. \$24.00. Paper, ISBN 978-0-8021-4401-0. \$14.00. A novel set in a post-disaster world. What will we do when the oil is all gone? ED

Maloy, Kate. **Every Last Cuckoo.** Algonquin, 2008. ISBN 978-1-5651-2541-4. \$22.95. Paper, ISBN 978-1-5651-2675-6. \$13.95. Sarah, 75, decides to take family and strangers under her roof, as families did during the Great Depression. First novel set in Vermont will delight. AH

Morton, Kate. **The Forgotten Garden.** Atria, 2009. ISBN 978-1-4165-5054-9. \$26.00. A four year-old girl left on a ship leaving for Australia. Years later, her granddaughter travels to England to unravel the complicated and fascinating mystery of her grandmother's origins. LSR

Verghese, Abraham. **Cutting for Stone.** Knopf, 2009. ISBN 978-0-3754-1449-7. \$26.95. A gripping novel that contains everything: Africa, nuns, doctors, conjoined twins, deep love, and civil war. Completely absorbing and moving. LSR***

SENSE OF PLACE

Aravind, Adiga. **The White Tiger.** Simon & Schuster, 2008. ISBN 978-1-4165-6259-7. \$24.00. Paper, ISBN 978-1-4165-6260-3. \$15.00. A slender taut tale of two Indias, the Darkness and the City. Pair with *Slumdog Millionaire* for discussion? AH

French, Tana. **The Likeness.** Viking, 2008. ISBN 978-0-6700-1886-4. \$25.95. Paper, ISBN 978-0-1431-1562-5. \$15.00. French delivers on the promise of her first *In the Woods* with a gripping tale of a Doppelganger who brings a dead girl back to life. Inventive and atmospheric. AH***

Galloway, Steven. **Cellist of Sarajevo.** Riverhead, 2008. ISBN 978-1-5944-8986-0. \$21.95. Paper, ISBN 978-1-5944-8365-3. \$15.00. Based on a true story during the Siege of Sarejevo, a renowned cellist plays for 22 days to remember the 22 dead. Hope during the darkest of days. SG

Kallos, Stephanie. **Sing Them Home.** Atlantic Monthly, 2009. ISBN 978-0-8711-3963-4. \$23.95. A mother lost in a tornado, her children unable to resolve their grief, a community, and the resolution of a complicated tragedy. LSR

Marciano, Francesca. **The End of Manners.** Knopf, 2008. ISBN 978-0-3754-2510-3. \$23.95. Paper, ISBN 978-0-3073-8674-8. \$14.95. A food photographer is sent to Afghanistan to do a story on suicide by women forced into marriage. Brilliant depiction of Afghanistan. LSR

Williams, Terry Tempest. **Finding Beauty in a Broken World.** Knopf, 2008. ISBN 978-0-3754-2078-8. \$26.00. Williams creates beauty and understanding through her close examination of broken ecosystems. SG

STRONG CHARACTERS

Arsenault, Raymond. **The Sound of Freedom.** Bloomsbury, 2009. ISBN 978-1-5969-1578-7. \$25.00. A biography about America's most loved singer, Marian Anderson, and how she started the Civil Rights movement way back in 1939. ED

McCracken, Elizabeth. **An Exact Replica of a Figment of My Imagination.** Little, Brown, 2008. ISBN 978-0-3160-2767-0. \$19.99. McCracken lost her first child to stillbirth at nine months. A candid, unsentimental memoir. AH

McCrery, Nigel. **Still Waters.** Knopf, 2008. ISBN 978-0-3073-7703-6. \$23.95. A creepy mystery with a fabulous, horrible criminal at its center. The detective has synesthesia, experiencing evidence of his senses as odors and tastes. AH

Pepperberg, Irene. **Alex & Me.** Collins, 2008. ISBN 978-0-06-167247-7. \$23.95. A heart-warming story of this bird's life, scientific gifts and death. ED

Ripley, Amanda. **The Unthinkable: Who Survives When Disaster Strikes – and Why.** Crown, 2008. ISBN 978-0-307-35289-7. \$24.95. How do character and training determine who survives a bombing, fire, plane crash or an earthquake? What is disaster preparedness? ED

Sittenfeld, Curtis. **American Wife.** Random House, 2008. ISBN 978-1-4000-6475-5. \$26.00. Paper, ISBN 978-0-8129-7540-6. \$15.00. The fictionalized story of Laura Bush (aka Alice Lindgren) and the long history of a marriage. LSR

Strout, Elizabeth. **Olive Kitteridge.** Random House, 2008. ISBN 978-1-4000-6208-9. \$25.00. Paper, ISBN 978-0-8129-7183-5. \$14.00. A retired school teacher in Maine is the thread that knits these powerful short stories together. Vivid and, once you listen, very funny. AH***

Taylor, Jill Bolte. **My Stroke of Insight.** Viking, 2008. ISBN 978-0-6700-2074-4. \$24.95. Paper, ISBN 978-0-4522-9554-4. \$15.00. A young woman narrates the stroke that collapsed her world. Both the emotional experience and the medical facts that demystify stroke. SG

Yenne, Bill. **Sitting Bull.** Westholme, 2008. ISBN 978-1-5941-6060-8. \$29.95. Paper, ISBN 978-1-5941-6092-9. \$15.95. Separating facts from myth is at the heart of this biography of Sitting Bull. SG***

CURRENT EVENTS

Genova, Lisa. **Still Alice.** Pocket, 2009. ISBN 978-1-4391-1688-3. \$26.00. Paper, ISBN 978-1-4391-0281-7. \$15.00. A Harvard professor of linguistics is lost in early onset Alzheimer's in this brief first novel. AH

Knopper, Steve. **Appetite for Self-Destruction.** Free Press, 2009. ISBN 978-1-4165-5215-4. \$26.00. Fun, important book about the greedy dinosaurs who used to decide what we listen to. ED

Kunin, Madeline. **Pearls, Politics, and Power.** Chelsea Green, 2008. ISBN 978-1-6035-8010-6. \$24.95. Paper, ISBN 978-1-9333-9292-9. \$14.95. Kunin wants women to step forward and assume power. She has plenty of advice on how the world works, and the drive to make sure we are part of improving it. AH

Niman, Nicolette Hahn. **Righteous Porkchop.** HarperCollins, 2009. ISBN 978-0-06-146649-6. \$23.99. What is ethical treatment of animals raised for food, and how does it matter to us? ED

Power, Samantha. **Chasing the Flame.** Penguin, 2008. ISBN 978-1-5942-0128-8. \$32.95. Paper, ISBN 978-0-1431-1485-7. \$17.00. A close look at the UN Humanitarian, Sergio Vieira de Mello who is challenged by war torn situations, but manages to make a difference. SG

Roach, Mary. **Bonk.** Norton, 2008. ISBN 978-0-3930-6464-3. Paper, ISBN 978-0393334791. \$14.95. Roach bring her breezy outlook and serious reference skills to the topic of sex. AH

Royte, Elizabeth. **Bottlemania: How Water Went on Sale and Why We Bought It.** Bloomsbury, 2008. ISBN 978-59691-371-4. \$24.99. Useful and enjoyable look at the ecology and economics of buying what we all have for free. ED

Schwartz, John Burnham. **The Commoner.** Doubleday, 2008. ISBN 978-0-3855-1571-9. \$24.95. Paper, ISBN 978-1-4000-9605-3. \$14.95. The fictionalized story of the crushing power of the Japanese monarchy on the modern, educated commoner crown princess. LSR

Initials after each annotation refer to the reviewers, Ernie Drown, Susan Guilmette, Amy Howlett and Lynne Shotton Reid. Each annotation marked *** reflects the top two choices of the reviewer. The list of books is available to libraries as a Word file from amy.howlett@mail.dol.state.vt.us.



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Why Booktalk?

- Increases circulation.
- Promotes your collection efficiently, and books ARE the library brand
- Reaches more people and particularly the nonuser
- Is the most effective way to motivate reading
- Increases audience awareness of the library.
- Builds relationships with people.
- Provides effective outreach to community groups.

What is a Booktalk?

A booktalk is a commercial designed to get someone to read a book. It is a way of "selling" your merchandise, a performance to get the audience excited about your book.

Tips for Writing Booktalks

- ❑ Choose only books you like, ones you have read, ones you are enthusiastic about.
- ❑ Find a “hook”: exciting or humorous incidents? Character? Setting? Short read?
- ❑ Include fiction and nonfiction, well known and obscure
- ❑ What is the book’s appeal? News link? Link to life? What appeals to you?
- ❑ Don't give away the ending or any other secrets.
- ❑ Don't give a book review - no evaluations or critical material
- ❑ Don't rehash the whole book. Think trailer, not complete plot
- ❑ Read the book jacket or the blurb on the back for other ideas
- ❑ Keep each talk the length of a movie trailer - 2 to 4 minutes
- ❑ Consider a YouTube trailer (Sam Maskell, Judah Hamer) or podcast (Cheryl Cox)

The Performance

- ❑ Ask about the audience ahead of time, find out what they're like
- ❑ Make eye contact with your listeners, involve them. Leave them wanting more.
- ❑ Leave a list so the audience can mark their favorites
- ❑ Bring the books and let people take them out
- ❑ Create real variety in your performance. Themes may or may not work
- ❑ Prepare what you are going to say; consider memorizing; PRACTICE!
- ❑ Prepare too many books so you can drop one or a few if the audience fades
- ❑ Start strong and end strong. Choose a favorite author? Don't Elevate their taste.
- ❑ Keep notes for yourself—the individual talks, the presentation, what bombed
- ❑ Don't just sell the book, sell the library—programs, staff, services
- ❑ Offer booktalks to school groups, clubs, book groups, parents before Christmas.
- ❑ There are as many ways to booktalk as there are books. Find yours...

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